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## The Bulgarian quest for NATO membership

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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



## THESIS

### THE BULGARIAN QUEST FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP

by

Daniela Gr. Dimitrova

March 2001

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Donald Abenheim  
Mikhail Tsyarkin

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# **THE BULGARIAN QUEST FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP**

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Master of Arts in National Security Affairs -  
March 2001**

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The thesis examines the challenges the Republic of Bulgaria has experienced since 1989 in striving to become a member of NATO.

This thesis describes how NATO has addressed the security challenges arising from the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the emergence of new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.

By highlighting the efforts Bulgaria has undertaken to meet NATO membership requirements, this thesis will show the country has been a reliable partner to NATO since 1992, and once included in a future round of Enlargement, Bulgaria will be a viable Alliance member.

**DoD KEY TECHNOLOGY AREA:** End of the Cold War, New-Democracies, Bulgaria and NATO

**KEYWORDS:** NATO after 1989, New Democracies, Bulgaria in its Search for Security, PfP, MAP, DCI, Bulgaria’s Membership in NATO.

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**THE BULGARIAN QUEST FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This thesis examines the Republic of Bulgaria's efforts since 1989 for NATO membership within the broader context of Alliance reform. The new democracies that emerged throughout Central and Eastern Europe had to face new political and security challenges, which were remnants of the Soviet influence.

This work focuses on the initial idea of NATO membership, its evolution within the Bulgarian political scene from 1989 to 2001, and the hurdles its proponents faced. In addition it analyses the political implications the quest for NATO membership had on Bulgaria's domestic and foreign policy.

This thesis delineates the steps the current Bulgarian government has initiated and is employing to strengthen peace, stability and confidence building in the Balkans. Bulgaria's performance within the framework of Partnership for Peace (PfP), Membership Action Plan (MAP) and its efforts during the 1998-1999 Kosovo crisis bode well for Bulgaria's future contributions to NATO.

The Republic of Bulgaria is one of Eastern European countries that overthrew a communist regime and established a viable democracy. While Bulgaria recognizes the need for stronger security guarantees because of its size and the geopolitics of the region, it sees NATO membership not only as a provider of security guarantees but as a way to ensure the continued evolution and consolidation of democracy as well. Additionally, the country desires to embrace the European and Trans-Atlantic values with NATO being the best vehicle to promote these values and relations.

The possibility for future Bulgarian membership in NATO is encouraging. Factors such as its pro-western President, who advances a positive worldview of Bulgaria and a stable government, contribute to Bulgaria's efforts aimed at membership in the Alliance. Additionally, Bulgaria's NATO-member neighbours Greece and Turkey strongly support future membership. Tri-national projects and efforts initiated by these countries show they can work together, thereby, improving regional stability.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the Republic of Bulgaria's efforts since 1989 for NATO membership within the broader context of Alliance reform. The new democracies that emerged throughout Central and Eastern Europe had to face new political and security challenges, which were remnants of the Soviet influence.

The profound changes in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 have provided the countries of that part of the continent a unique opportunity to re-integrate into the community of free and democratic nations. In striving to join the Euro-Atlantic institutions, the new European democracies are seeking both to put the legacy of the communist past behind them for good and to contribute – of their own free will – to the building of a new, united Europe. This integration strategy is also motivated by justifiable security concerns, as demonstrated by the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The formula of security through integration and cooperation has gained growing support as the most promising tool for enhanced regional stabilization and security.<sup>1</sup>

This work focuses on the initial idea of NATO membership, its evolution within the Bulgarian political scene from 1989 to 2001, and the hurdles its proponents faced. In addition it analyses the political implications the quest for NATO membership had on Bulgaria's domestic and foreign policy.

This thesis delineates the steps the current Bulgarian government has initiated and is employing to strengthen peace, stability and confidence building in the Balkans. Bulgaria's

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<sup>1</sup> Nadezhda Mihailova, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, *Security in South-Eastern Europe and Bulgaria's Policy of NATO Integration*, Spring 1998, Available [Online]<<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1998/9801-02.htm>>[9 November 2000]

performance within the framework of PfP, MAP and its efforts during the 1998-1999 Kosovo crisis bode well for Bulgaria's future contributions to NATO.

## **A. BACKGROUND**

For more than four decades the world was divided into the Eastern and Western Blocs. Each side was not only politically aligned but was also militarily protected by its own security organization, the Warsaw Pact and NATO, respectively.

After the dissolution of these blocs and the tremendous changes in the world order in 1989, it became clear that the people previously divided by these political and military blocs actually shared common concerns, values and interests. Eastern and Central European Warsaw Pact countries demonstrated a desire to trespass the old boundaries and join their "former adversaries." Thus NATO became the guarantor of peace and stability not only in Western Europe but in Central and Eastern Europe as well.

Faced with these challenges NATO embarked on a process of internal change and adaptation to find the best mechanisms to respond to the needs of former Warsaw Pact countries looking for security guarantees. In addition to its core function of "collective defense", NATO assumed a new "collective security" role.

Collective defense means maintaining the Alliance's political cohesion and military capabilities to deter coercion and aggression and, if necessary, to conduct military operations to restore the security and integrity of the territory protected by the alliance commitments. Collective security concepts call upon aspirations for universally shared responsibility for peace and international order...<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.269.



Membership in the Alliance became a top foreign policy and security priority for emerging governments throughout Central and Eastern Europe. These countries viewed membership in NATO both as a means to guarantee their territorial integrity and security as well as a way to promote democracy and give impetus to institutional, social and military changes that were required to meet membership criteria.

NATO's essential purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The Alliance has worked since its inception for the establishment of a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe based on common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This central Alliance objective has taken on renewed significance since the end of the Cold War because, for the first time in the post war – history of Europe, the prospect of its achievement has become a reality.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, “NATO, in particular, has sought to stabilize post-communist democracies, expanded its membership and sphere of influence, promoted a special relationship with Russia, and helped manage Balkan security – to list just a few of its activities.”<sup>4</sup>

The Republic of Bulgaria is one of Eastern European countries that overthrew a communist regime and established a viable democracy. While Bulgaria recognizes the need for stronger security guarantees because of its size and the geopolitics of the region, it sees NATO membership not only as a provider of security guarantees but as a way to ensure the continued evolution and consolidation of democracy as well. Additionally, the country desires to embrace

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<sup>3</sup> NATO Handbook, *Chapter I, What is NATO* (Office of Information and Press, Brussels, 1998-1999), p.23

<sup>4</sup> Sean Key, *NATO and the Future of European Security* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), p.1-2.

the European and Trans-Atlantic values with NATO being the best vehicle to promote these values and relations.

Because of the political reshuffling that took place in Bulgaria after 1989, the country did not always have a consistent policy towards the membership issue. The first practical steps to this end were taken in 1997 when the current government of the Union of Democratic Forces came into power.

Although Bulgaria was not extended an invitation during the last round of Enlargement, the country's leadership continued efforts to meet membership criteria in anticipation of the next round by actively participating in relevant activities to include the Partnership for Peace and the Individual Partnership Program (IPP).

Bulgaria, through its actions, has shown that it would make a credible and reliable NATO member, who is not only willing to receive but generate security as well. Bulgaria's assistance to NATO operations in the 1998-1999 Kosovo crisis clearly demonstrates its efforts at increasing the confidence and security in the Balkans. These recent contributions in support of NATO demonstrate that the Bulgarian membership would be mutually beneficial.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

This thesis is based on an analytical survey of primary and secondary sources addressing the steps NATO has undertaken in response to the security needs of the new Central and Eastern European democracies. This work focuses on the initial idea of NATO membership and its evolution within the Bulgarian political scene. The thesis concentrates on the

progress Bulgaria has accomplished in its quest for membership since 1997 when the UDF government came into power and commenced serious efforts to this end. It examines the points of view of leading US experts on NATO concerning Bulgaria's place in the Alliance and the stance of the Bulgarian decision-makers on the membership issue.

## **C. THESIS ORGANIZATION**

Chapter II summarizes the character of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, developments after 1989, and provides a detailed account of the concrete measures NATO has taken since the 1990s in implementing its new collective security roles associated with Central and East European countries. Chapter III addresses the internal political implications of Bulgaria's quest for NATO membership. It examines the country's efforts to meet the membership requirements and its contributions to stability and peace in the region. Chapter IV delineates the major achievements of Bulgaria and outlines the way ahead.

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## **II. NATO FACES THE NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES**

### **A. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Western European nations were economically devastated and militarily weak as a result of Second World War. These nations felt threatened by the Soviet Union, which in contrast had emerged from the war militarily stronger.

The Soviet Union maintained approximately thirty divisions in Eastern Europe, including nine tank and eleven motorized infantry divisions. Western intelligence estimates concluded that in the immediate postwar years, the Soviet Union had some five million men in the armed forces, with 175 divisions in the western Soviet Union and another 125 divisions in strategic reserve.<sup>5</sup>

The Soviet presence was further consolidated through a number of communist regimes installed in East European countries.

Britain concluded a military alliance with France, known as the Treaty of Dunkirk, in 1947.<sup>6</sup> While the primary purpose of this alliance was to prevent future German aggression, it also provided for economic assistance and military cooperation against the political threat of other potential aggressors, specifically Russia.

The Prague Coup of February 1948 served to reinforce Europe's fear of the Russian threat. Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, immediately called for greater economic and military co-operation among western European countries. Thus in 1948 the Treaty of Dunkirk was

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.14.

expanded to include the Benelux countries, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg, and became the Treaty of Brussels. This Treaty was both a military and an ideological alliance, providing for collective self-defence and economic and social collaboration in Western Europe.

These five nations grew increasingly suspicious of Russian intentions following the Berlin Blockade. Additionally, the United States wanted to find allies in Europe to contain communist expansion.

On 4 April 1949 twelve nations - the United States, Canada, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Italy, Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg - signed the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington D.C.

The primary reason for NATO's founding was the Soviet challenge in Eastern Europe. NATO was an alliance created in response to a threat. As Charles Bohlen wrote in his memoirs: 'Our participation in the North Atlantic Treaty arrangement was entirely due to Soviet policy and power...Had the Soviet Union not chosen to prevent the unification of Germany in 1947 and 1948, there would have been no North Atlantic Treaty.'<sup>7</sup>

The partners of the Treaty believed that Russian Communism, an anti-democratic ideology, posed a new threat to the democratic world and stated that "an armed attack against one or more of them shall be considered an attack against them all."<sup>8</sup> In the event of such an attack they promised to take whatever action deemed necessary to ensure the preservation of peace and their civilized way of life. This Treaty served to draw together western European nations under American leadership. The establishment of NATO as an essential defensive

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>8</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty, Article 5.

organization against Communist aggression was an initial and important step in developing European and Trans-Atlantic cooperation.

In response to the formation of NATO, the Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact, named after the city where the satellites of the Soviet Union signed a multilateral Treaty on Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance in May 1955. This Treaty was almost identical to the existing bilateral treaties between each country and the Soviet Union. The Warsaw Pact was comprised of the communist states in Europe – the Soviet Russia, Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and East Germany – with the exception of Yugoslavia. The Pact spoke of peaceful intentions and defense. The Treaty assured its members of immediate assistance to include the use of armed force in the event of aggression and, therefore, precluded their participation in any other coalition or alliance. To provide for military assistance, a Russian Supreme Commander was appointed to lead the combined armed forces of the Pact.

The formation of a legally defined, multilateral alliance organization also reinforced the Soviet Union's claim to power status as the leader of the world socialist system, enhanced its prestige, and legitimized its presence and influence in Eastern Europe. However, as events inside the Soviet alliance developed, this initial external impetus for the formation of the Warsaw Pact lost its importance, and the Soviet Union found a formal alliance useful for other purposes. The Soviet Union created a structure for dealing with its East European allies more efficiently when it superimposed the multilateral Warsaw Pact on their existing bilateral treaty ties.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Library of Congress, *Federal Research Division, 1992, Country studies*, Available [Online]:<  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/appnc.html>, [24 January 2001]

For four decades the two organizations co-existed, counterbalanced each other, and developed politically and militarily. With the collapse of communist regimes throughout Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, the Organization of the Warsaw Pact became irrelevant, resulting in its death. Since “it was a permanent Soviet article of faith to link the future of the Warsaw Pact with NATO’s”<sup>10</sup> a number of Soviet senior officials believed that NATO would soon follow suit.

During the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union in 1989-91, prominent Soviet officials expressed confidence that NATO itself would soon fade away as well. Eduard Shevardnadze, then the Soviet foreign minister, declared in September 1990 that ‘in the future NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization will become component parts of all-European security structures and later will probably be dissolved in them.’<sup>11</sup>

The Soviet ideologists were mistaken in their forecasts due to their supposition that did not take into account a number of factors. The most important of these factors was the failure to recognize the real character of NATO, an organization comprised of willing members. Unlike the Warsaw Pact, which was based on a superpower leader controlling satellite members, NATO was built upon the premises of voluntary communication between democratic states in Europe and North America. As Thomas Risse – Kappen, the joint International Relations Chair at the Department of Political and Social Sciences and the Robert Schuman Center at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, describes:

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<sup>10</sup> Gerald B. Solomon, *The NATO Enlargement Debate 1990-1997* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C, 1998), p.6.

<sup>11</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.27.



NATO provides a unique institutional framework for the Europeans to affect American policies. As I argue in this book, liberal democracies successfully influence each other in the framework of international institutions by using norms and joint decisions-making procedures as well as transnational politics. Playing by the rules of these institutions, they do not just constrain their own freedom of action, but they also gain access to the decision - making processes of their partners.<sup>12</sup>

The Soviets underestimated the importance of NATO's achievements and past successes in keeping it from disbanding. "The unprecedented degrees of institutionalized cooperation, consultation, and politico-military integration that formed the core of the alliance's vast network of transnational links were not to be discarded lightly. NATO, then, was a form of insurance that guaranteed a measure of continuing influence and security for its member states."<sup>13</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of 1989, while there was some questioning as to the future role of NATO, the Alliance did not disintegrate. Rather, it quickly managed to adapt to the new realities and found appropriate mechanisms to address the security needs of the new democracies, becoming the most viable guarantor of European stability.

NATO's leaders led by the Americans, envisaged a day when political Europe, united by shared values and stabilized and protected by the transatlantic link embodied in NATO, would more closely resemble its geographical entity. NATO projected itself as the guardian of pan-European security, committed to the creation of a stable and prosperous environment for its former adversaries, as well as for its members.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Risse – Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies* (Princeton University Press, 1995), p.225

<sup>13</sup> Ian Q.Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997), p.186.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.174.

Risse-Kappen emphasizes that “the end of the cold war not only does not terminate the Western community of values, but potentially extends it into Eastern Europe and may be into the successor states of the Soviet Union, creating a ‘pacific federation’ (Immanuel Kant) of liberal democracies from Vladivostok to Berlin, San Francisco and Tokyo.”<sup>15</sup>

## **B. WHAT NATO HAS DONE**

The 1989 Central and Eastern European revolutions brought changes in the security environment. The 1990s witnessed a number of events that influenced not only the security of that part of the globe but of the world as a whole. The German unification in 1990, the withdrawal of Soviet Groups of Forces from Czechoslovakia and Hungary in 1991 and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in mid-1991 are the most important events of this kind. In 1992 the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia disintegrated. In 1993 Czechoslovakia divided peacefully, and, thus, the number of the European states was increased by one. NATO emerged as the backbone of Europe’s security architecture but at the same time was challenged by these events. Despite the rapid pace of historical events in the 1990s, as if history had been fast-forwarded, NATO was successful in meeting emerging challenges. The Alliance initially responded to the developments in East Germany, then to the former Warsaw Pact members of Central and Eastern Europe, and to the new states emerging as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Risse – Kappen, *Cooperation Among Democracies* (Princeton University Press, 1995), p.223.

NATO reacted to the events of 1989 by extending a hand of friendship to six former Warsaw Pact members - Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the Soviet Union - at the London Summit in July 1990. NATO invited these countries to visit Brussels and address the North Atlantic Council (NAC). The Alliance further extended an invitation to these governments to establish regular diplomatic liaison with NATO and to intensify military contacts during this period of historic change.<sup>16</sup> NATO also stated its determination to protect peace and construct “a Europe whole and free.”<sup>17</sup>

In the words of NATO's London Declaration, 'We need to keep standing together, to extend the long peace we have enjoyed these past four decades. Yet our alliance must be even more an agent of change. It can help build the structures of a more united continent, supporting security and stability with the strength of our shared faith in democracy, the rights of the individual, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.'<sup>18</sup>

In November 1991 at the Rome NAC Summit, NATO approved the Rome Declaration, which provided for broadening interaction with the Soviet Union and the Central and East European countries. The Alliance created the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), building upon the existing NAC, and initiated another major change in adopting the New Strategic Concept, replacing its 1967 strategy of "Flexible Response."<sup>19</sup> As to the character and substance of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council:

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<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *Central European Civil-Military Relations and NATO Expansion* (Institute for National Strategic Studies), Available [Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT/Temporary>, [13 November 2000]

<sup>17</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.73.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *Central European Civil-Military Relations and NATO Expansion* (Institute for National Strategic Studies), Available [Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT/Temporary>, [13 November 2000]

An American initiative, the NACC was a new 'institutional relationship of consultation and cooperation on political and security issues' open to all former (and newly independent) members of the Warsaw Pact. The NACC states began extensive consultation on issues including national defense planning, principles and key aspects of strategy, force and command structures, military exercises, democratic concepts of civil-military relations, civil/military coordination of air traffic management, and the conversion of defense production to civilian purposes.<sup>20</sup>

In December 1991 the foreign ministers of the "former adversaries"<sup>21</sup> and newly independent Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia met with NATO representatives for an inaugural NACC meeting and adopted a "Statement on Dialogue, Partnership and Cooperation." This statement endorsed annual meetings of the NACC at the ministerial level, bimonthly meetings of the NAC with liaison ambassadors, additional NACC meetings when circumstances warranted, and regular meetings of the Political, Economic and Military Committees with liaison partners. The purpose of the cooperation was security-related issues. In February 1992 the NACC met at the level of ambassadors to discuss and adopt a "Work Plan for Dialogue, Partnership, and Cooperation." In March of the same year at an Extraordinary NACC meeting the number of members was increased to thirty-five by including the Former Soviet Republics with the exception of Georgia. Later the number of NACC members was increased to thirty-eight.

In late 1993 the United States proposed to NATO Allies the Partnership for Peace program which is outreaching to the East, going beyond NACC and focusing on defense and

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<sup>20</sup> Sean Key, *NATO and the Future of European Security* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998), p.66.

<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *Central European Civil-Military Relations and NATO Expansion* (Institute for National Strategic Studies) Available [Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT/Temporary>, [13 November 2000]

military cooperation. The goals and purposes of the PfP program were defined in the North Atlantic Council Declaration:

At a pace and scope determined by the capacity and desire of the individual participating states, we will work in concrete ways towards transparency in defense budgeting, promoting democratic control of defense ministries, joint planning, joint military exercises, and creating an ability to operate with NATO forces in such fields as peacekeeping, search and rescue and humanitarian operations, and others as may be agreed.<sup>22</sup>

At the January 1994 NATO Brussels Summit the heads of state and governments agreed to the PfP program and invited other European states, members of NACC or the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to join. Although the former Warsaw Pact countries saw PfP as a compromise that held out the prospect for NATO expansion they recognized that some relationship had to be worked out with Russia. In addition NATO states, Parliaments, and publics needed to give greater consideration to the whole NATO expansion issue before making a decision.<sup>23</sup> This forum resulted in adopting the Combined Joint Task Forces, a commitment to future expansion of the Alliance, and approval of the European Security and Defense Identity.

At that Summit a "Partnership for Peace: Invitation and Framework Document" was issued. In that document NATO leaders outlined the PfP program and declared their commitment to enhance the security and stability in Europe.

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<sup>22</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.97.

<sup>23</sup> James W. Morrison, *NATO Expansion and Alternative Future Security Alignments* (National Defense University), Available[Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT/Temporary>, [13 November 2000]

This Partnership is established as an expression of a joint conviction that stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area can be achieved only through cooperation and common action. Protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights, and safeguarding of freedom, justice, and peace through democracy are shared values fundamental to the Partnership.<sup>24</sup>

The ministers addressed the NATO expansion issue and reaffirmed that the Alliance, in compliance with article X, is open to new members. The Alliance leaders emphasized that the active participation in the PfP process is an important prerequisite to the evolutionary process of NATO expansion. The then-NATO Secretary General, Willy Claes highlights the three stages of the PfP process: the country signs the PfP framework agreement, presents its ideas for an Individual Partnership Program and during the third stage the proposals are examined by NATO and the respective PfP country.<sup>25</sup> Initially the fashioning of PfP was accompanied by certain skepticism. Despite the claims that the Partnership initiative was yet another way to postpone the accommodation of the newly independent countries into NATO throughout the years PfP proved to be a flexible and efficient mechanism. “In Walter Slocombe’s words, ‘by creating the Partnership for Peace, NATO has done more than just building the basis for enlargement. It is in fact creating a new zone of security and stability throughout Europe.’”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed*, Appendix 2: Partnership for Peace: Framework Document” (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.309.

<sup>25</sup> James W. Morrison, *NATO Expansion and Alternative Future Security Alignments* (National Defense University), Available [Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT/Temporary>, [13 November 2000]

<sup>26</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.155.

The Alliance expansion issue started to gain momentum as early as the 1994 NATO Brussels Summit. Later that same year President Clinton said: "NATO expansion is no longer a question of whether, but when and how."<sup>27</sup>

By early 1995, twenty-five states of CEE, Western Europe and Eurasia joined NATO's sixteen members as PfP partners and commenced military cooperation. Some PfP countries presented their Individual Partnership Programs and sent their representatives to work at NATO Headquarters in Brussels and the PfP Coordination Cell at NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Mons, Belgium.

In addition, in 1995 NATO decided to first answer the questions of "how" and "why" should the Alliance expand before answering the question of "who" and "when" will join it. To that end a study within the organization was initiated and the answers were formulated in the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement.<sup>28</sup> The Study gave an explicit answer to the question "why" Enlargement and highlighted the Enlargement's characteristics:

It will encourage and support democratic reforms, including the establishment of civilian and democratic control over the military forces. It will foster the patterns and habits of cooperation, consultation and consensus building which characterize relations among the current Allies and will promote good-neighborly relations in the whole Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> James W. Morrison, *NATO Expansion and Alternative Future Security Alignments* (National Defense University), Available [Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT/Temporary>, [13 November 2000]

<sup>28</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.103.

<sup>29</sup> NATO Handbook, *Chapter IV, The Opening Up of the Alliance* (Office of Information and Press, Brussels, 1998-1999), p.82.

The Study referred to Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, through which the accession of new members is done, explaining “how” the Enlargement would proceed.<sup>30</sup> Related, “the Study made clear that willingness and ability to meet such commitments, not only on paper but in practice, would be a critical factor in any decision taken by the Alliance to invite a country to join.”<sup>31</sup>

The questions of "who" and "when" were formally answered at the 1997 NATO Summit in Madrid in what is called "the first round "of post-Cold War enlargement.<sup>32</sup> The Allies invited the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary to begin talks, sign the accession protocols in December 1997 and complete the ratification processes in time by the fiftieth anniversary of the Alliance in April 1999. By extending these invitations the Alliance contributed to the Eastern European security. In 1997 US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright wrote: “Now the new NATO can do for Europe's east what the old NATO did for Europe's west: vanquish old hatreds, promote integration, create a secure environment for prosperity, and deter violence in the region where two world wars and the cold war began.”<sup>33</sup>

The 1997 NATO Madrid Summit marked a watershed moment in the history of the Alliance. By inviting Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to start accession talks NATO made a practical step aimed at reinforcing peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. This fact

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.82.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.82.

<sup>32</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.104.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.92.



was indicative of the progress and depth of the internal and external adaptation of the Alliance. The “open door” policy announced at the Summit gave hopes and impetus to those who were not invited to become NATO members in that round.

According to Secretary of Defense William Cohen, ‘Central and East European states not included in the first round of new members will not be isolated and will be able to continue to prepare for membership if they wish to. The first new members will not be the last. No aspirant nation will be excluded from continuing to work towards membership.’<sup>34</sup>

The Summit introduced the enhanced PfP and a second Planning and Review Process (PARP) cycle that made the PfP process more relevant and operational.

The enhancement of PfP is an integral part of the external adaptation of the Alliance. Together with the special relationships which are developed between the Alliance and Russia and the alliance and Ukraine, it is helping to set the stage for new enhanced security arrangements for Europe.<sup>35</sup>

The enhanced PfP has a broad spectrum of cooperation areas to include air defense related matters; airspace management/control; civil emergency planning; consultation, command and control (plus communications and information systems); crisis management; defense planning and budgeting; defense policy and strategy; democratic control of forces and defense structures; language training; military geography.<sup>36</sup>

Of note, the role of the partners in the PfP decision-making and planning process was strengthened. In addition to managing the PfP programs the Political Military Steering

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.119.

<sup>35</sup> NATO Handbook, *Chapter IV, The Opening Up of the Alliance* (Office of Information and Press, Brussels, 1998-1999), p.93.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.93.

Committee became responsible for the Partner Work Program (PWP) and the Individual Partner Programs (IPP). Aiming to help the partners plan military exercises and develop PWP and PARP interoperability objectives NATO increased the number of Standardized Agreements to 1,169.<sup>37</sup>

This Summit also marked the creation of the NATO- Russia Permanent Joint Council and NATO-Ukraine Commission.

That year the NACC was replaced by an organization including all PfP and NACC participants. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was established with the aim of creating an inclusive institution where topics related to peacekeeping; scientific and environmental cooperation, arms control verification and the conversion of defense industries could be discussed.

The EAPC's founders, the NACC members and PfP Partners, declared that its establishment would be 'a qualitative step forward in raising to a new level the dynamic and multifaceted political and military cooperation' already achieved in NACC and PfP, and that it would 'make a strong contribution to cooperative approaches to security and form an enduring part of the European security structure.'<sup>38</sup>

EAPC's function that "provides for increased involvement of Partner-countries in decision-making relating to activities in which they participate"<sup>39</sup> is important for the Partner countries.

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<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *NATO'S Membership Action Plan and Defense Planning: A Preliminary Assessment* (Institute for National Strategic Studies), p.2.

<sup>38</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p.159.

<sup>39</sup> NATO Handbook, *Chapter IV, The Opening Up of the Alliance* (Office of Information and Press, Brussels, 1998-1999), p.86.

The 1999 NATO Washington Summit that commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Alliance, introduced programs to make PfP more operational and approved the new Alliance Strategic Concept. To improve the interoperability among the Alliance forces and where possible between the Alliance and partner forces the organization launched a Defense Capability Initiative.

Another important NATO tool is the Defense Capability Initiative. NATO has thus moved away from the merely diplomatic to being more involved with the MAP partners' force planning process. Some MAP partners actually see the DCI as leading to a de facto (vice de jure) operational Article 5.<sup>40</sup>

In addition NATO introduced a third PARP cycle and Membership Action Plan aimed to establish closer relations among the partners and the Alliance and manifest its Open Door policy. The enhanced PARP is similar to the planning procedures among the Allies. The PARP Ministerial guidance sets partner target force goals to build capabilities and enables partner support elements to be involved in exercise planning.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, "beginning in 1999, NATO approved PARP Ministerial Guidance (now like the DPQ) that replaced the old interoperability objectives with partnership Goals (PG) for Interoperability and for Forces and Capabilities. The new guidance aimed to develop specific armed forces and capabilities that partners could offer in support of NATO operations."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *Partnership for Peace: After the Washington Summit and Kosovo* ( Institute for National Strategic Studies, Number 167, August 1999), Available [Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT>, [13 November 2000]

<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *Partnership for Peace: After the Washington Summit and Kosovo* ( Institute for National Strategic Studies, Number 167, August 1999), Available [Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT>, [13 November 2000]

<sup>42</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *The Next Round of NATO Enlargement* (Institute for National Strategic Studies), p.4.

The importance of MAP was twofold. The MAP “went further than the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement in defining what the aspirants needed to accomplish on the ‘path’ to membership. It was designed to incorporate lessons learned in the accession discussions with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.”<sup>43</sup>

The MAPs of the Partner countries identify five activity areas to include political and economic, defense/military, resources, security, and legal issues.<sup>44</sup> These activity areas contribute to the development of the necessary for membership capabilities. Each Partner generates a MAP Annual National Plan (ANP). The ANP incorporates the Partner’s objectives and targets aimed at future membership. The MAP includes a feedback mechanism through a NAC 19 +1 Partner progress assessment, which serves as a clearing house to coordinate security assistance and enhanced defense planning, and establishes and reviews the approved planning targets.<sup>45</sup>

Jeffrey Simon, leading US government official on PfP, Senior Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies states: “In fact, one might argue that the MAPs comprehensive program has created the necessary “*NATO acqui*” against which the alliance can assess the

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<sup>43</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *NATO’S Membership Action Plan and Defense Planning: A Preliminary assessment*, (Institute for National Strategic Studies), p.2.

<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *Partnership for Peace: After the Washington Summit and Kosovo* (Institute for National Strategic Studies), Available [Online]:< <file:///C:/WINNT>, [13 November 2000]

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *NATO’S Membership Action Plan and Defense Planning: A Preliminary Assessment* (Institute for National Strategic Studies)

nine MAP partner's technical preparation and capacities and judge readiness for membership.'<sup>46</sup>

Based on the Alliance capabilities for further Enlargement and the willingness of the countries to pursue membership or remain within the PfP framework the Washington Summit differentiated between the twenty-four partner countries. These countries were divided into nine MAP and fifteen non-MAP states.

Today the aspirant countries can only second guess as to what the future steps of NATO would be in dealing with the Central and Eastern European countries. Of note, some suppositions of analysts and experts in that field are encouraging. In his latest article "The Next Round of NATO Enlargement" Simon predicts:

The next NATO Summit scheduled for 2002 will have enlargement on its agenda, not just because the April 1999 Washington Summit stated that the next Summit would review the enlargement process, but also because the nine Membership Action Plan (MAP) foreign ministers launched a political initiative on May 18-19, 2000 in Vilnius, Lithuania, to remind the member states of NATO "to fulfill the promise of the Washington Summit to build a Europe whole and free...[and] at the next NATO Summit in 2002 to invite our democracies to join NATO."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *The Next Round of NATO Enlargement* (Institute for National Strategic Studies), p.4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp..1-2.

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### **III. BULGARIA IN A NEW SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

#### **A. WHAT HAS BULGARIA DONE**

Bulgaria, a small country located in the Balkans, on the border of Asiatic Turkey and across the Black Sea from the Russian and Soviet Empires, has always been under strong political influence from both east and west.

After finally regaining its independence at the end of the nineteenth century, modern Bulgaria stood in the shadow of European power politics through the first nine decades of the twentieth century. In that period, three successive major geopolitical antagonisms largely determined Bulgaria's place in the world: the Ottoman Empire versus Slavic Europe, the Axis powers versus the Allies, then the Warsaw Pact opposing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.<sup>48</sup>

On 3 March 1878 under the Treaty of San Stefano Bulgaria was liberated from a five century Turkish yoke. This Treaty provided for an autonomous Bulgarian state bordering the Black and Aegean seas. Four months later Britain and Austria-Hungary, concerned that the new state would extend the Russian influence into the Balkans, reshaped the Treaty of San Stefano into the Treaty of Berlin. According to the Treaty of Berlin the territory of Bulgaria would be one third of the originally prescribed by the Treaty of San Stefano with Macedonia and Thrace reverted to Otoman control and Eastern Rumelia staying under Turkish rule, but with a Christian governor.<sup>49</sup> The large Bulgarian populations remaining in these territories, outside the new state, caused resentment endured into the next century.

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<sup>48</sup> Glenn E. Curtis, *Bulgaria – a country study*, (Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 1993), p.xxix-xxx.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20

Because the West, particularly Great Britain, played a significant role in carving up the Balkans, and Bulgaria in particular, in hopes of curbing Russian power, many historians speculate that Bulgaria's alliances with Germany in both World I and World War II were products of irredentist sentiment that grew out of the Treaty of Berlin.<sup>50</sup>

In 1878 Bulgaria easily managed to establish its government, which accomplished a degree of stability in the aftermath of Turkish rule. The Turnovo Constitution of 1879 established an advanced and democratic system.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, the monarchy that lasted from the 1880s until WW II was established. The Turnovo Assembly elected "Alexander of Battenberg, a nephew of the tsar who had participated in the campaign of 1877-78, but also a German prince, son of an Austrian general, and related to the British royal family. He thus reflected accurately in his person the interests of the great powers."<sup>52</sup> In that period Bulgaria managed to sufficiently boost up the economy of the country, raise the living standards of the population and take steps to improve education and culture.

As it turned out, the years 1886 to 1912 formed the only prolonged period of peaceful development that Bulgaria was to enjoy. Between 1912 and 1944, Bulgaria participated in two local conflicts and two world wars.<sup>53</sup>

Although by 1912 Bulgaria had primarily devoted itself to domestic problems, the fate of the Bulgarians remaining under Turkish rule was an important consideration. Eastern and

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<sup>50</sup> Eugene K. Keefe, *Area Handbook for Bulgaria*, (Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1974), p.20.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>52</sup> L.A.D.Dellin, *East-Central Europe under the Communists: Bulgaria*, (Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1956), and p.12.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.



Western Thrace as well as Macedonia had sizeable Bulgarian population and important economic and strategic advantages. The territory of Macedonia was the most highly disputed by all the Balkan states

The tumultuous history of Macedonia set the stage for the two Balkan wars. In 1912, at the onset of the First Balkan War, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Greece formed an alliance to drive the Turks from Europe. Turkey, who was at war with Italy at the time, was weak and disunited. Macedonia and Thrace were hotbeds of internal disorder.<sup>54</sup>

The defeat of the Turks in the First Balkan War did not result in settlement of the Macedonian issue. Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria had claims to the land. A partial solution was found through a compromise between Bulgaria and Serbia according to which the northern section went to Serbia, while the eastern was given to Bulgaria.<sup>55</sup> This compromise did not last long.

In 1913 the Second Balkan war began, the Greeks, Montenegrins, Serbs and Romanians joining forces with their previous enemy, the Turks, against their former ally, the Bulgarians. This rivalry had been fostered by both Austria and Russia. Eventually, the Bulgarians turned to the Russians for arbitration and finally signed a mutual defense treaty with Russia.<sup>56</sup>

In 1913 Bulgaria's fights on two fronts made it weak and the country had to surrender. As a result of the Second Balkan War Bulgaria was given a very small portion of Macedonia.

The participation of Bulgaria in WW I was another attempt to solve the Macedonian issue. The major political players in Bulgaria were divided whether Bulgaria should align itself

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<sup>54</sup> Eugene K. Keefe, *Area Handbook for Bulgaria*, (Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1974), p22.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

with the Entente (Russia, France and Britain) or should join the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary and Germany).<sup>57</sup> In October 1915 Bulgaria, lured by the territorial offers of the Central Powers, signed a secret treaty with them and entered the war.<sup>58</sup>

Bulgaria, of all the Balkan states, was the only one to join the Central Powers, led by Germany and Austria, in World war I. It was deeply ironic that Bulgaria chose to side with her former enemy and oppressor, Turkey, and against her former friend and protector, Russia.<sup>59</sup>

In spite of some success early in the war, Bulgaria and the Central Powers were defeated. Bulgaria had to give up the idea of regaining Macedonia and Thrace and cope with a complicated situation aggravated by external fighting and internal division.

Under the Treaty of Neuilly – sur – Seine in November 1919, Bulgaria lost part of western Thrace to Greece and some small territories on its western frontier to Yugoslavia. This left Bulgaria with a small net gain, chiefly on its southern frontier, but it was so slight in terms of expectations and costs that the wars of 1912-18 have come to be regarded as a national catastrophe.<sup>60</sup>

The period between the two World wars, characterized by uneasy political coalitions, slow economic growth, and re-emerging of the Macedonian problem,<sup>61</sup> was difficult for Bulgaria

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.22.

<sup>57</sup> Glenn E. Curtis, *Bulgaria – a country study*, (Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 1993), p 31.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>59</sup> Eugene K. Keefe, *Area Handbook for Bulgaria*, (Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1974), p.23.

<sup>60</sup> L.A.D.Dellin, *East-Central Europe under the Communists: Bulgaria*, (Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1956), and p.17.

<sup>61</sup> Glenn E. Curtis, *Bulgaria – a country study*, (Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 1993), p.33.

Bulgaria entered World War II, as it was the case with World War I, because of the Macedonian question. This time it aligned itself and fought on the losing German side.

In December 1941 Bulgaria placed herself squarely on the German side by declaring war on Great Britain and the United States and joining the Rome-Berlin Axis.... Despite the declaration of war against Great Britain and the United States, Bulgaria refused throughout World War II to declare war on the Soviet Union.... When Germany declared war on Russia, Bulgaria continued to retain neutrality toward, and to maintain diplomatic relations with, the Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup>

Bulgaria siding with the wrong allies lost this war as well. The country's attempts to release itself from the Alliance failed. The war ended on 4 September 1944 with the Soviets entering Bulgaria. The communists came into power in 1944 and ruled the country until 1989.

Although in the minority, the communists had been the driving force in forming the coalition as an underground resistance organization in 1942. The presence of the Red Army, which remained in Bulgaria until 1947, strengthened immeasurably the communist position in dealing with the Allies and rival factions in the coalition.<sup>63</sup>

WW II did not settle the Macedonian issue in favor of Bulgaria either. As a result of this war Bulgaria gained Southern Dobruja and aligned itself with the Soviet Union and the other communist countries.

During the Cold War Bulgaria sought national security guarantees through membership in the Organization of the Warsaw Pact. The seven participating countries in the Warsaw Pact were united solely by communist ideology.

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<sup>62</sup> Eugene K. Keefe, *Area Handbook for Bulgaria*, (Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1974), p.27.

<sup>63</sup> Glenn E. Curtis, *Bulgaria – a country study*, (Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 1993), p.43.

During the communist period (1944-1989), ‘The Soviet Union’s Most Loyal Ally whose clock was set on Moscow time’ was only too willing to identify national security with the systemic security of the Moscow-led association of the Warsaw Treaty states united by a common ideology. The Kremlin imposed an obligation upon each of the member states to defend and strengthen the ideological system of real existing socialism, with no regard for intrinsic considerations of national security per se.<sup>64</sup>

The events at the end of 1989 and early 1990 marked the beginning of Central and East European states democratization. The democratically elected governments were no longer willing to associate their security, political, and economic development with membership in the existing socialist security and cooperation structures.

After the dissolution of the bipolar model Europe was divided into four zones with different level of security. Bulgaria and the other countries from Central and Eastern Europe as well as the former Soviet Republics belonged to the so-called “grey zone”<sup>65</sup> of security. In addition “with the collapse of the USSR, Warsaw Pact, and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, Bulgaria lost its allies, the protective Soviet umbrella, indeed all guarantees for its security – and this in a much troubled and highly volatile region of the world.”<sup>66</sup>

Bulgaria apart from facing the common for the post-communist countries security “vacuum” had to cope with problems resulting from the regional conflict in its immediate

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<sup>64</sup> Trevor Waters, *Bulgaria-Now on Track for a Secure Future?*, Available[Online]:<<http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/csrc/G69-trw.htm>., [22 January 2001], p.8

<sup>65</sup> *Bulgaria and the security vacuum*, Available [Online]:< <http://www.online.bg/nato/bg/chapter2.html> [14 November 2000]

<sup>66</sup> Trevor Waters, *Bulgaria-Now on Track for a Secure Future?*, Available[Online]:<<http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/csrc/G69-trw.htm>., [22 January 2001], p.8.

neighborhood. Because of Yugoslavia's disintegration, Bulgaria had to settle three major groups of concerns: conflict spill over, eventual refugee or immigration flow from the zones of the conflict, and possible negative identification from the point of view of choice of civilization values.

Looking for national security guarantees Bulgaria had to choose between three options: to continue to be strategically undetermined, to select neutrality, or anticipate NATO membership. The country could afford to be strategically undetermined only for a short period of time since this position does not provide a permanent solution of the national security problems. Neutrality preconditions are a developed economy and abundance of resources for support of the political independence. Bulgaria had neither of those so neutrality was not a viable scenario in her case. Neutrality further results in an increased isolationism. Apart from security guarantees Bulgaria needed integration and cooperation, which could only be provided through membership in NATO.

The attitude and undertakings aimed at relations with NATO were influenced by the events unfolding in the domestic arena. The period 1989-1997 was characterized by a serious political reshuffling with governments coming into power and quickly resigning. Within seven years Bulgaria had one communist, two socialist, one democratic, three expert caretaker governments and three Parliaments. Throughout most of the time the democratically elected President had to work with representatives of different political parties, some of which were strongly against the idea of NATO membership.<sup>67</sup> Bulgaria had an inconsistent policy to NATO

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<sup>67</sup> Zheljko Zhelev, *In the Big Politics*, (Trud Publishing House, 1998), p.60

membership because of differences in political stance and ideas of the major institutions. In 1997 for the first time in the new Bulgarian history President, Prime Minister and Parliamentary majority represent one and the same political party with shared values and ideas. This unanimity gives impetus to the country's quest for membership in the Alliance.<sup>68</sup>

In the beginning of the 1990s the relations with NATO became a criteria for political alignment of Central and East European countries. As a result in Bulgaria the membership issue was highly politicized within the realm of domestic life. While the political elite was unanimous that the country should integrate into the European Community (later on the European Union) as soon as possible, the question of NATO membership did not enjoy such a consensus. All governments after 1990 declared as their major foreign policy priority the integration of Bulgaria into the Euro-Atlantic structures, but at the same time the political parties interpreted and realized that goal in different ways. Some political parties and their governments did not consider NATO as a tool for Euro-Atlantic cooperation. Instead, these governments paid much more attention and strengthened the relations with the other outreaching institution the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Although the initial steps towards establishing relations with NATO were undertaken as early as the tenure of the Great National Assembly,<sup>69</sup> the lack of consensus on the membership issue became clear. The first who initiated undertakings to this end were the Union of Democratic Forces deputies Solomon Passi

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<sup>68</sup> *Appendix I*

<sup>69</sup> It was constituted as a result of the first democratic election and followed the pattern and name of the National Assembly, constituted after Bulgaria's liberation in 1878.

(later President of Atlantic Club – Bulgaria) and Ljubomir Ivanov, as well as the Bulgarian Socialist Party deputy Dragomir Draganov. In August 1990 Solomon Passi appealed to the Great National Assembly to commence work for the integration of the country into NATO structures. On 23 August that year Passi delivered a speech in the Bulgarian Parliament, stating:

The obvious trend of the political processes inherently points out, that it is high time for Bulgaria to take a very good care of its defense by both looking for more and reliable allies, as well as few and smaller eventual enemies. Bulgaria's military and political membership in NATO would accelerate the natural processes, would provide a new and unprecedented security on the Balkans and the strongest guarantees for peace and good relations with its four neighbors as well as a mighty impetus for the economic and informational integration with United Europe. Think, honorable senators, think!<sup>70</sup>

The idea for NATO membership was gaining momentum. In November 1990 five deputies, representing different political groups, visited NATO HQ. According to Dr. Zhelev<sup>71</sup>, these deputies were the first ever Parliamentarians from Eastern Europe to visit Brussels. The deputies met NATO Secretary General Manfred Vjerner and had a lively and interesting exchange with him. As a result of that meeting the deputies decided to establish Atlantic Club Bulgaria upon the return back home. Throughout the years Atlantic Club-Bulgaria became one of the most efficient non-governmental organizations in promoting the Euro-Atlantic ideas and values.

Related, in Bulgaria 135 deputies strongly supported the idea of Bulgaria's candidacy for NATO membership. To that end they drafted a Memorandum, which had to be approved

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<sup>70</sup> Zhelju Zhelev, *In the Big Politics*, (Trud Publishing House, 1998), p.65.

<sup>71</sup> Zh. Zhelev is the first democratically elected President, one of the founders of the Union of Democratic Forces.

by the Great National Assembly. Although the draft of the Memorandum was twice on the agenda of the Great National Assembly, it was never discussed in a plenary session. In December that year the initiative for NATO membership was handed over to the National Security Committee.<sup>72</sup>

The cornerstone document in the relations between Bulgaria and NATO is the National Assembly Declaration on NATO, dated 21 December 1993. Through this Declaration the Parliament requires from the Bulgarian Government to power up and add substance to the cooperation between Bulgaria and NATO, taking into account the national interests of the country. The Declaration's ponderous language and style reflect the difficult compromise between the political parties, but outline the political framework for the executive power, aimed at achieving membership. From 1994 until 1997 Bulgaria built upon this Declaration and became an active participant in PfP.

As a result of the efficient exchange and efforts of both the country and the Alliance on 14 February 1994 in NATO HQ, Brussels, the then President of Bulgaria Dr. Zhelju Zhelev, signed the Partnership for Peace Framework Document. Bulgaria joined the big family of PfP countries and started the process of getting to know the Alliance.

The Individual Partnership Program between the Republic of Bulgaria and NATO is the major planning document for co-operation in the framework of Partnership for Peace. The IPP was developed on the basis of the Partnership Working Programme, approved by NATO and

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<sup>72</sup> Zhelju Zhelev, *In the Big Politics*, (Trud Publishing House, 1998), pp..65-66.



covering a 3-year period of time. It included the proposals of the Republic of Bulgaria, the bilateral co-operation programs between Bulgaria and NATO nations and other PfP Partners. In November 1994, the first Individual Partnership Programme between the Republic of Bulgaria and NATO that included activities in twenty-two areas of co-operation was approved.<sup>73</sup>

In February 1995, the Republic of Bulgaria joined the first cycle of the Planning and Review Process by submitting to NATO HQ a PfP Overall Interoperability Survey comprising of eighteen Interoperability Objectives (IOs). An Individual Assessment was elaborated on the basis of the Overall Interoperability Survey. At the beginning of that year Bulgaria was among the first to send its liaison officers to NATO HQ and the Partnership Coordination Center in Mons, Belgium when they were open for Partner countries. In addition, Bulgaria was active in hosting and participating in PfP exercises. Despite the hard work of the military the politicians ruined the country's achievements. With the socialist government of Zhan Videnov coming into power in 1995 the foreign policy of the country suffered a draw back. Of note, "the ideologues [of the socialist party] pay lip service to the idea of a united Europe, but are staunchly anti-Western and never miss a chance to vent animosity toward NATO."<sup>74</sup>

The 1995-1996 Bulgarian socialist government could not disguise its negative attitude to NATO membership. This particular attitude had negative impact on the European and Euro-

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<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Bulgaria, *Information Package*

<sup>74</sup> Venelin I. Ganev, *Bulgaria's Symphony of Hope*, (Journal of Democracy, 8:4), Available [Online]:<  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v008/8.4ganev.html?](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v008/8.4ganev.html?) [7 November 2000]

Atlantic integration of the country. Bulgaria was the only post-communist country whose government refused to apply for full NATO membership.

Bulgaria's ex-communist government was at odds with reformist and pro-NATO president Zhelyu Zhelev and did not apply for NATO membership until 1997. Bulgaria was also interested in mutual consultations and expressed particular attention to reciprocity and dialogue before decisions were taken. Because it had little interest in peacekeeping and in any case could not, as a neighboring state, participate in former Yugoslavia, its priority was getting on with nuts-and-bolts issues such as access to interoperability information.<sup>75</sup>

This refusal resulted in foreign policy isolation of the government and the country. The country's leadership was equivocal expressing its official policy. In a 1995 interview, the then Minister of Defense asked whether the Bulgarian MoD would look toward NATO with regard to arms sales, replied:

We will look both toward Russia and NATO. To think that we can **avoid** integration into the European structures is an illusion. On the other hand, Russia has been our ally for centuries. The issue is not about being 'for' or 'against' NATO but about the road along which we would march toward NATO. In addition, it must be remembered that 95 percent of our weapons are made in Russia<sup>76</sup>

This attitude reads – we want in NATO but we want to maintain our relations with Russia as well.

Prime Minister Zhan Videnov was more ambiguous in his answers during Parliamentary hearings when former UDF premier Filip Dimitrov insisted that Bulgaria should clearly and firmly state its will for admission to NATO. Videnov articulated the government's position:

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<sup>75</sup> Gerald B. Solomon, *The NATO Enlargement Debate 1990-1997* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1998), p.45

Bulgaria will **avail** itself of every opportunity offered by the North Atlantic security and defense structures, so that in the event of their enlargement in the future Bulgaria could join them, granted that its national interests are fully respected, without trying to build its national security at the expense of third countries.<sup>77</sup>

The parliamentary majority of the ruling Bulgarian Socialist Party was postponing all plenary debates, related to NATO membership. Instead of undertaking the necessary political and diplomatic steps, as the Government was assigned to do, it chose a “wait and see” policy. The BSP and its government waited to see how NATO would evolve and transform from a defense structure into a security structure and study the proposed criteria and conditions. In addition, the government wanted to make sure that NATO was not planning to set up its military bases on Bulgarian territory and expected from NATO to regulate its relations with Russia.<sup>78</sup>

These deliberations leave the impression that the BSP did not desire NATO membership but was afraid to categorically state its position. The Bulgarian opposition and the foreign experts were aware that relations with Russia and the Russian influence, which was coming back, resulted in that stance. The West saw the Bulgarians as more attached to the Russians than any other post-communist country.

In addition, the momentum of the practical co-operation in 1995-96 slowed down. The political leadership considered the partnership relations and status sufficient for the current

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<sup>76</sup> McNair Paper 40: *NATO Expansion and alternative future security*, Available [Online]:<  
<file:///C:/WINNT/Temporary>. [13 November 2000].

<sup>77</sup> Bulgarian Telegraph Agency report, 08.05.95. Available [Online]:<  
<http://www.hri.org/news/balkans/bta/95-05-08.bta.html>, [14 November 2000]

<sup>78</sup> Bulgarian Telegraph Agency report, 29.05.95. Available [Online]:<  
<http://www.hri.org/news/balkans/bta/95-05-29.bta.html>, [14 November 2000]

moment and in a long-term perspective. For this BSP government the perspective of NATO membership was not a priority and was not on the foreign policy agenda. The unclear position and controversial signals sent by Bulgaria resulted in unpredictability and discontinuity in the relations with the Alliance. The destroyed quality of the partnership influenced negatively the preparation for membership, and provoked legitimate doubts in NATO nations about the consistency and direction of the Bulgarian foreign policy.<sup>79</sup>

The Alliance did not oppose Bulgaria's position. As an example in the summer of 1996 UK Secretary of Defense Michael Portillo visited Bulgaria with the message that Bulgaria would be the bridge between NATO and Russia. Although this message fitted well with the ruling majority it was not acceptable for the President, who together with Atlantic Club Bulgaria was the only institution that consistently worked towards achieving NATO membership. The President sometimes sounded desperate by stating that the Bulgarians feel that the West had left them in the lurch but he was the most outspoken and out-front promoter of the membership idea. He did not miss an opportunity to make Bulgaria's case. In his speeches, addresses and meetings with counterparts and NATO officials the President dwelled upon the country's reasons for NATO membership: it gives political motivation to the will to support democratic institutions and to guarantee human rights; Bulgaria does not want to cause new dividing lines in Europe, or to become an island standing outside the new European security architecture; NATO enlargement will categorically confirm the right of these European democracies to a free

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<sup>79</sup> *The discussion on full membership in NATO*, Available [Online]:<  
<http://www.online.bg/nato/bg/chapter3-2.htm> [14 November 2000]

choice in the security area; no country outside NATO should be allowed to block or deter this process; Bulgaria does not conceal that it seeks cooperation with and membership in NATO as a guarantee for its security; this is also a desire to work with NATO member countries to contribute to the joint efforts in the area of economic development, crime prevention, and money laundering, which are among the main needs of the new East European democracies.<sup>80</sup>

## **B. TRANSLATING THE WORDS INTO PRACTICE**

Beginning in late 1996 political fortunes changed and turned against the ruling Socialist government. In Bulgaria's second direct presidential elections of October-November 1996, Petar Stoyanov of the Union of Democratic Forces defeated the Socialist party candidate and began a five-year term in January 1997. At the end of 1996, mass demonstrations and rallies, expressing the discontent of the nation with the BSP domestic, economic and social policy, forced the Socialist government to resign and go for early parliamentary elections. A UDF caretaker government under Stefan Sofianski immediately took steps to stabilize the economy. The elections of April 1997 resulted in victory for the UDF and its coalition partners. For the first time in its new history Bulgaria has President, Government and Parliamentary majority representing one and the same political party. The new political situation positively influenced the quest for NATO membership. The determination and motivation of the country's efforts for membership are summarized by President Petar Stoyanov in his Statement during NAC meeting on 29 January 1997:

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<sup>80</sup>Zhelju Zhelev, *NATO, PFP, and the New Europe*, Available [Online]: <  
<http://www.csd.org/96Book/Zhelev.html>. [14 November 2000]

Our firm desire for NATO membership is based on the following premises: first Bulgaria's belonging to the same value system and our readiness to contribute to the general security and share the risks of defending and protecting these same general values; second, the conviction that a changing NATO will be the cornerstone of Euro-atlantic security in the 21 century; third, our desire for equal participation in the processes of reform and decision making in the area of Trans-atlantic security especially when our region is concerned.<sup>81</sup>

Steps to this end were undertaken as early as February 1997. On 17 February, the caretaker Government for the first time ever stated Bulgaria's firm and unequivocal desire for membership in the Alliance. The Government circulated a Statement among all NATO member countries claiming that Bulgaria wished to be considered and invited to start accession negotiations. The Statement referred to the National Assembly Declaration of December 1993, which is the only document enjoying broad consensus among the political parties on the membership issue.

In March 1997 the caretaker government approved a National Program for Preparation and Accession to NATO and established an Intergovernmental Committee on NATO Integration. When the new Bulgarian Government came into power after the April elections it reiterated the stance of its predecessor. On 8 May 1997 the National Assembly adopted a National Consensus Declaration defining NATO membership as a major national priority. In early 1997 the country began an "intensified dialogue" with NATO on prospective membership. Bulgaria was active in the work of the EAPC. The Bulgarian Ministry of Defence, an essential part of the efforts towards integration, worked hard in the second PARP cycle from 1997 until

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<sup>81</sup> Statement of H. E . Mr .P .Stoyanov, President of R. of Bulgaria, Available [Online]:<  
<http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1997/s970129b.htm> [15 November 2000]

1999. Forty Interoperability Objectives were identified for that second PARP cycle. By contrast to the first PARP cycle, the IOs of the second cycle were concrete with a consistent implementation timetable. These objectives cover areas such as: command and control structure, officers training, particularly in procedures and tactics, air control and air defence, air traffic control and transport, movement planning land operations, availability of units, maps and symbols, medical support, logistics command, control and supply, logistic sustainability and language training.

In July 1997 at the Madrid NATO Summit, Bulgaria was not invited to join the Alliance. The encouraging message was that the North Atlantic Organisation was not closing its door for other aspirants willing and able to assume the responsibilities of membership. The government did not give up and developed a strategy to be among the countries expected to be invited in the next round of Enlargement. The strategy included an intensified dialogue with NATO on issues related to membership, reform of the Armed Forces to meet NATO standards, active participation in EAPC and PfP, and regional co-operation efforts to reinforce stability and security in South Eastern Europe.<sup>82</sup>

The President of Bulgaria was in the lead of the undertakings. He was brief but eloquent in answering the question “why” when pressing and lobbying for NATO membership:

This is our civilizational choice. It is deeply motivated and final. It is a cultural choice, a strong wish to return to where we belonged 45 years ago and from

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<sup>82</sup> Nadezhda Mihailova, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, *Security in South-Eastern Europe and Bulgaria's Policy of NATO Integration*, Spring 1998, Available [Online]<<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1998/9801-02.htm>>[9 November 2000]

where we were cut off by force. It is not just to go along with the ‘fashionable infatuation.’<sup>83</sup>

Describing how the Bulgarians, a significant proportion of whom support membership in the Alliance, see NATO the President highlighted that to his nation the organization is not only a security system. He explained that for the Bulgarians the Alliance represents a set of values to include free markets, protection of foreign investment, protection of human rights, and the rule of law. In addition Bulgaria considers the membership in the Alliance as a way to express the country’s foreign policy orientation; it provides incentive for reforms on the domestic arena, and acts as an impetus for modernization.<sup>84</sup>

The National Security Concept adopted in April 1998 demonstrates the will of the government. This Concept defines membership in NATO and the EU as national priority in compliance with the long-term interests of the country.

The process of integration into NATO and the EU has a positive influence upon Bulgarian security. However only full membership in these institutions will provide complete guarantees for Bulgaria’s security – this is Bulgaria’s national priority.<sup>85</sup>

Although slowly, Bulgaria was steadily taking the right path. The assessment of NATO’s Secretary General Javier Solana, who in April 1998 “ found that Bulgaria had ‘radically changed’ with ‘remarkable progress’ having been made in economic and military

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<sup>83</sup> Radio Free Europe, Bulgaria, *President Presses for NATO Membership*. Available [Online]:<  
<http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1998/02/F.RU.980212133900.html> .[15November 2000]

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Article 34, National Security Concept of the Republic of Bulgaria



reform; he described Bulgaria as ‘a generator of stability in the region’<sup>86</sup> is an example of that progress.

Despite the determined and hard work of the new leadership much has to be done. Simon's article “Bulgaria and NATO: 7 Lost Years,” published in May 1998 helped the leadership realize the complicated character of the membership issues. It served as an eye opener to the government and gave it food for thought. The article published in NDU's “Strategic Forum” was highly critical to the Socialist government of Bulgaria that hampered the country's relations with NATO. In addition it pointed out the mistakes and mis-perceptions of the government that came into power in 1997, as far as membership in the Alliance is concerned. The author makes an assessment of Bulgaria's progress in meeting membership criteria such as political reform/democratization, economic reform, treatment of ethnic minorities, relations with neighbors, Constitution and Defense Law, Parliamentary oversight, Defense Ministry, Military capability and NATO interoperability. The article came up with the conclusion that the results were unsatisfactory and the Bulgarian leadership and society had not understood how much time they had lost and how much work has to be done.

Members of the new government believe that their change of policy and good intentions are enough to merit serious consideration. Though Bulgaria now appears serious in its quest, unfortunately it has lost seven years. Bulgaria is still trying to understand what is expected of it and remains ill prepared.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Trevor Waters, *Bulgaria-Now on Track for a Secure Future?*, Available [Online]:<<http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/csrc/G69-trw.htm>., [22 January 2001], p.9

<sup>87</sup> J.Simon, *Bulgaria and NATO:7 lost years*, Available [Online]:<<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum142.html> [13 November 2000], pp..1-2

Simon explains the need for the Bulgarian political elite as well as the population at large to understand how much they were lagging behind. Related, he highlights the need of better education on NATO membership issue and the benefit of it.

In sum, Bulgarian politicians have taken little action toward Euro-Atlantic integration until recently. As a result, their knowledge of, and experience with, NATO remains relatively limited. Though the new government has taken some encouraging new steps, Bulgarians need to understand how far behind their previous governments' actions have put them.<sup>88</sup>

Additionally, Simon makes it clear that NATO and US should work with Bulgaria to help the country to cope with the problems and to progress ahead. In his article the author came up with concrete recommendations as to how this should be done.

The Defense Ministry needs help to reform. The U.K. ministry of defense should be encouraged to provide a top-down assessment, as it has already done for Hungary and Romania. The United States needs to coordinate its bilateral efforts in defense budgeting, planning, and resource and personal management. Since further work is needed in the downsizing and redeploying of Bulgarian forces, military professionalism, and quality of life, U.S. bilateral activities should be focused in this direction.<sup>89</sup>

The constructive criticism sufficiently reinforced the will of the government to pursue the goal of membership. The intensified dialogue with the Alliance on political, military, financial, and security issues related to the future membership was made an integral part of the comprehensive pre-accession strategy. The other priorities focused on reform of the Armed Forces,

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.6.

strengthening of civilian control of the military and achieving interoperability with NATO forces. To this end the Bulgarian Parliament introduced significant changes in national legislation concerning defense and Armed Forces. In February 1998 the government approved a three-staged plan to reform the Armed Forces over the next twelve years (“Plan 2010”). The goal of the Armed Forces reform is to develop a highly mobile, more professional and well-equipped force that is significantly reduced in size. The force structure will be comprised of main defense; rapid reaction and territorial defense forces, as well as reserves.

The first stage of Plan 2010 covers the period 1998 – 2004. The Ministry of Defense formulates the major goals for this initial phase as follows:

The aim of this plan of the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense is to fulfill the **objective** in achieving the sufficient defense potential to guarantee the sovereignty, security and independence of the state; to defend its territorial integrity in case of aggression; to support effectively its foreign policy for peace, security and stability, so that the perceived goals of the national strategy for integration with European Union and NATO to be achieved.<sup>90</sup>

In its quest for membership Bulgaria takes account of the importance of regional stability and makes efforts to that end. An example is its participation in the South East European Defense Ministerial process and its outcome, the Multinational Peacekeeping Forces, that contributes to improved neighborly relations.

Bulgaria recognizes the importance of the regional co-operation as a key instrument in keeping the peace on the Balkans. We are actively participating in the establishment of a unique for our region form of co-operation – the Multinational Peacekeeping Forces South Eastern Europe. Today we are co-

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<sup>90</sup> Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Bulgaria, Plan for Organizational Development of the Ministry of Defense by the Year 2004, October 1997

operating so that we guarantee the security and peace in the region and to achieve high interoperability and technical level<sup>91</sup>

At the end of the year a particular demonstration of the country's attitude towards NATO was the decision of the National Assembly to permit Alliance planes fly over the country in case the Kosovo conflict intensified. This was a clear signal to NATO leaders that Bulgaria was ready to get further involved in the initiative of the Treaty it wishes to join. In his letter to Prime Minister Kostov, the then NATO Secretary General thanked him for Bulgaria's stand and promised help in case of a possible Serbian attack against the country. "I wish to be perfectly clear that our Allies will treat very seriously every attack of Yugoslavia against a country – partner of NATO."<sup>92</sup>

The sustained efforts of the country continued in 1999 as well. On 8 April 1999 the National Assembly approved the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria, which considers its security and defence as related to the regional, European and Euro-Atlantic security and defence systems. The Military Doctrine defines the partnership and membership in NATO, the WEU and EU as a strategic priority for ensuring the country's national security and defence.<sup>93</sup> In addition it reflects the broader implications of NATO and EU membership.

The Republic of Bulgaria considers its membership in NATO and the EU as an opportunity to share the responsibility of democratic states in defending

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<sup>91</sup> Talking point of Mr. G. Ananiev, MoD of R.of Bulgaria, EAPC Ministerial, 18 December, 1998. Available [Online]:< <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1998/s981218i.htm>. [13 November 2000]

<sup>92</sup> Letter of NATO Secretary General Javier Solana, Available [Online]:< <http://www.aimpress.org/dyn/trae/archive/data/199810/810119-016-trae-sof.htm>. [14 November 2000].

<sup>93</sup> Military Doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria, art.21, p.B, pC

common values as a prerequisite and guarantee of a stable democratic development of the country and pursuit of effective defence policies.<sup>94</sup>

Later that month Bulgaria had a chance to translate the words into practice. When NATO again asked whether the country was ready to provide the Alliance with access to its airspace during air strikes on Yugoslavia the government had to cope with a great opposition coming from the Bulgarian Socialist Party and its supporters, and to make sure that the constitution and major laws of the country were taken into consideration. When the decision about providing NATO with access to the country's airspace was voted in Parliament the BSP deputies were the only ones who were against. Despite BSP's position the parliamentary groups of the Union of Democratic Union, the Popular Union, the Euroleft and the Alliance for Salvation of Bulgaria supported the final decision in favor of reaching an agreement with NATO.

In addition the BSP was leading an active anti-NATO propaganda among its supporters. The statements made by the BSP leaders increased the fears and concerns of the population at large. They manipulated the traditional Bulgarian love for peace and promoted the idea that NATO is preparing for a military aggression against a sovereign state. BSP's functionaries focused on the fact that while the West is far way from Bulgaria, Serbia has been, is and will be a neighbor of Bulgaria. In their propaganda the socialists went to the extreme of depicting Milosevich as a wise statesman, caring for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of his country.

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<sup>94</sup> Military Doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria, Art.26

The government, although, acknowledged the concerns of the population. Prime Minister Ivan Kostov articulated the understanding of the leadership in his discussions in NATO HQ about the security guarantees that the Alliance can offer to Bulgaria.

Nobody likes to have a war raging next door. And I can tell you that the war is being heard from next door by the communities close to Bulgaria's Western border, and this can not but cause concern in people, so concern, fears, indeed - in the Bulgarian public is that other factor that makes any decision indeed difficult.<sup>95</sup>

The Premier mindful of the broader political context and Bulgaria's priorities stated that "Bulgaria wants to become a NATO member, so NATO's request to use its air space is a chance to demonstrate its credentials."<sup>96</sup>

In addition to providing NATO with access to its airspace Bulgaria undertook measures to alleviate the plight of the Kosovo refugees. The National Assembly through its Declaration on the Escalation of the Kosovo Crisis decided to help Macedonia and Albania in settling the refugee problem. Bulgaria took charge of the refugee camp Radusha, Macedonia. The government through the Ministry of Defense provided food, clothes and shelter to several thousands people.

As a result of the sustained efforts of the country, the progress in the field of military reform, civil society and improvement of the relations with the neighbors, as well as the categorical stance on the issue of NATO membership, Bulgaria was explicitly mentioned in the

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<sup>95</sup> *Bulgaria-NATO*, Available [Online]:< <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/docs99/990421-kosovo13.htm>. [14 November 2000]

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

Final Communiqué of the NATO Washington Summit and became one of the nine MAP countries.

US President Clinton's message during his visit to Bulgaria in November 1999 was encouraging about the way ahead. In some ways after the Kosovo conflict there is a more compelling case that can be made for NATO looking toward the nations of Southeast Europe in the next wave.<sup>97</sup>

### **C. THE WAY AHEAD**

Cognizant of the importance of regional co-operation and stability Bulgaria is taking part in the establishment and functioning of the Multinational Peacekeeping Forces South Eastern Europe, which are the outcome of the South East European Defense Ministerial process. The process itself was not easy but the countries in the region managed to find common grounds and good will to complete it within less than two years. The beginning was laid on 31 March 1996 in Tirana, Albania where the First South East European Defense ministerial took place. Italy (then chairing the EU) and the United States of America were in an observer capacity, while Greece, Romania and Slovenia did not participate. The Bulgarian representatives were "concerned" with the prospective "formation of the so called South Balkans," in other words putting into place new dividing lines in Europe, and they insisted on "a comprehensive approach to the problems of the region with the participation of all the interested countries."<sup>98</sup> The Ministerial did not take

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<sup>97</sup> *Clinton Leaves Door Open for Bulgaria in NATO*, Available [Online]:<  
[http://www.doser.org/clinton99/clinton\\_big/clinton2.htm](http://www.doser.org/clinton99/clinton_big/clinton2.htm). [15 November 2000]

<sup>98</sup> Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Bulgaria, *Information Package*

any concrete decisions but the participants agreed to have the next meeting in Sofia with enlarged participation as early as the autumn of that year. It was not known that the domestic situation in Bulgaria would not be good enough for the success of such a meeting. Of note, this Ministerial outlines the major principle of the new type of regional co-operation aimed at speeded integration of the countries in the European and Euro Atlantic structures.

The next step was made on 3 October 1997 in Sofia, Bulgaria, where the Second Defence Ministerial was held. All the countries from the region took part in it plus the United States, NATO, WEU, OSCE representatives and all EAPC countries in an observer capacity. The Ministers adopted a Joint Statement with annexed Follow up with concrete steps for co-operation. Two elements are important: the SEDM process permanently and categorically tied itself with “The direct integration of the region in the Trans Atlantic community”<sup>99</sup> reiterating the will of the participants to share common values through a series of concrete activities, and the decision to establish Multinational Peace Forces.

This second SEDM also took account of the importance of the regional cooperation and strengthening of confidence and security in the Balkans.

They [the Ministers] agree that the integration of South-Eastern European states into European security organizations, including an *early* NATO membership of the aspiring countries participating in the meeting, would be facilitated immensely by the expansion of regional defence cooperation and confidence - and security-building measures.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Sofia SEDM Joint Statement, 3 October 1997.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.



The Second SEDM obliged the participants to implement concrete activities in the region within the framework of the EAPC aimed at establishing the necessary synergy for action. Expert meetings, eight within one year, started with the task to develop an Agreement for the Establishment of regional peace forces. At their first meeting in Tirana in May 1998, the Deputy Ministers of Defence signed a Letter of Intention to establish Multinational Peace Forces in the region. This act served as a confirmation of the irreversibility of the negotiation process on the establishment of regional peace forces.

Additionally, Bulgaria tried to engage the EAPC with the problems of military co-operation in South Eastern Europe. As a result of the initiative of the Bulgarian Minister of Defense, Gueorgui Ananiev in June 1998 NATO's Working Group on Military Co-operation organized a discussion on the Common Modalities of Partnership Multinational Formations.

Since in other regions initiatives of similar character are in the process of development, today I would like to make a proposal - to make an analysis and develop the common modalities of the multinational regional formations within the framework of the EAPC, which are applicable no matter what their concrete character is. In this way the optimum ways for achieving interoperability with those of NATO formations will be found.<sup>101</sup>

This initiative demonstrated a mature approach to the problems of "multinationality" at a moment when IFOR, SFOR and ALBA had accomplished an unprecedented level of military co-operation and integration based on common political goals. The Partner nations declared

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<sup>101</sup> Statement of Mr.. Gueorgui Ananiev, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Bulgaria, Brussels, 12 June 1998

their readiness to share the responsibilities of NATO-led operations with troops on the ground. According to the Partners an over-arching Concept of Common Modalities of Multinational Formations would contribute to the operational character of the co-operation between them and NATO.

On 25 September 1998 in Skopje, Macedonia in the context of increasing tension in Kosovo the Third SEDM took place. It adopted a new Joint Statement with Follow on Measures and Activities. The Ministers of Defence of seven countries (Slovenia and US pertained their observer status) signed the Agreement on the Establishment of the Multinational Peacekeeping Forces South Eastern Europe. This was a unique event in the diplomatic history of the region within the last century. For the first time countries that have been either deadly enemies or best partners signed an agreement as equal partners. Of note, the Ministers of Defence during the debates stated their concern with the evolving conflict in the region. They expressed their support for UN Security Council Resolution 1199 on Kosovo and insisted for active engagement of the international community in finding a quick and permanent solution of the problems.

The signed Agreement for the Establishment of MPFSEE was the regional response to NATO's CJTF and the provisions of the 1998 Madrid Declaration.<sup>102</sup> The Parties made sure that the activities of the Multinational Brigade were consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The initiative was neither directed against any third state, nor intended to form a military alliance against any country or group of countries. According to this Agreement

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<sup>102</sup> Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Bulgaria, *Information Package*

the force would be available for possible employment in UN or OSCE mandated NATO-led or WEU-led conflict prevention operations. The location of the multinational brigade called South East European Brigade (SEEBRIG) would be on a four-year rotational basis, starting on the date of its activation, and would be hosted by four of the participating nations Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Greece. The SEEBRIG would be an “on-call” land force. The units allocated to it would remain at their permanent home base locations, and would come together to form the appropriate force packages for exercises /training activities and contingencies. A Political Military Steering Committee would be established as a joint executive body for oversight and to provide policy guidance for the SEEBRIG activities. For two years Greece would be hosting the PMSC.<sup>103</sup>

In May 1999 Sofia, Bulgaria hosted the Second Meeting of Deputy Ministers of Defense. This meeting, held weeks after the end of the “ALLIED FORCE” operation, was important in the context of the humanitarian crisis in neighboring Yugoslavia. It coincided with the beginning of the lessons learned process from NATO’s operation to include institutional, military-political, and military technical level. In addition, a subject of the debates was the implementation of the decisions taken by the Washington Summit. An assessment of the realized after Skopje’98 initiatives was done and new ideas were formulated. New imperatives were outlined to include harmonization of the national legislations, crisis management procedures, and exchange of information on the military reforms. The Second Meeting of Deputy-Ministers of Defense envisioned consultations on Article 10 and 11 of the Washington Treaty among the

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<sup>103</sup> Skopje SEDM Joint Statement, 25 September, 1998.

three new NATO members Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary and the MAP countries form the region. The idea to establish an Information Network for actions during crisis was adopted with consensus. The Deputy Minister of Defense agreed on the establishment of a task force that would be able to participate in the reconstruction of the region and planned for expert meetings, which would substantiate the idea. The participants in the meeting declared their will for a global approach to the problems of SEE, excluding any of the partial decisions made often in the most recent history of the region.<sup>104</sup> As for the place and role of the SEDM process within the broad framework of prospective NATO membership the meeting concluded:

The SEDM process can definitely be a positive contribution to accelerating the NATO enlargement process in South-Eastern Europe - through a series of membership-oriented initiatives the aspiring countries from the region will be encouraged to act as “regional stabilizers”, which is unquestionably the most essential political prerequisite for accession in NATO.<sup>105</sup>

On 11 September 1999 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria with the ceremony of the HQ of the Multinational Peace Force South Eastern Europe was officially inaugurated. This was a watershed event in the evolution of the SEDM process. Platoons from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Romania and Turkey marched in front of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministers of Defence of the regional countries. In his address the SEEBRIG Commander Major General Ethem Erdagi from the Turkish General Staff stated:

The MPFSEE will provide a unique, historic, golden opportunity for the Armies of the region to substantially contribute to the regional security and stability as well as improve solidarity. I would like to stress that such a peace force will

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<sup>104</sup> Sofia, Deputy SEDM Ministers of Defense Joint Statement , May 1999.

<sup>105</sup> Information on Second Meeting of Deputy Ministers of Defence of NATO member and PfP Partner countries from South Eastern Europe.

come into being for the first time in the Balkans, and may play a significant role leading the stability and security in the region.<sup>106</sup>

The Fourth South East European Defence Ministerial held on 30 November 1999 in Bucharest, Romania outlined new tendencies in the regional defense co-operation, reflecting the pragmatism of these countries. As a result of the events in the region to include the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo and the number of devastating earthquakes in Greece and Turkey Bulgaria recognized the need of deepening of the co-operation. Through its Minister of Defense Bulgaria made a concrete proposal towards consolidation and bringing more substance to the overall cooperation aiming at enhanced efforts in the field of civil-emergency planning.

For the SEDM to consider the possibility for the establishment of a **Civil-Military Emergency Planning Council** with the participation of the countries from the region - Turkey, Greece, Rumania, Macedonia, Slovenia, Albania, Bulgaria and Italy. This Council will provide a permanent exchange of information and will facilitate the co-operation processes improving in this way the regional capacity for timely reaction in case of disasters, catastrophes and accidents.<sup>107</sup>

The Defense Ministerial held in October 2000 in Thessaloniki, Greece added substance to the growing pattern of co-operation on practical problem solving and security building measures emanating from within the region.

Of note, in a short period of time the SEEBRIG accomplished significant results in joint training and developing its operational capabilities. It has conducted two exercises – CPX SEEBRIG 1999 (8-11 December 1999 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria) and CPFX SEVEN STARS

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<sup>106</sup> Speech of General Erdagi, TA , Plovdiv, Sept.11, 1999

<sup>107</sup> Statement of Mr. Gueorgui Ananiev, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Bulgaria, Fourth SEDM, Bucharest, 30 November 1999.

2000 (17-30 September 2000 at Koren Corps Range, Bulgaria).

The military reform is another indication of Bulgaria's desire and willingness to join the Alliance. Aiming at future membership Bulgaria is downsizing its Armed Forces. According to the Military Doctrine at the end of the reform the country's Armed Forces will comprise of 45 000 troops and 5000 civilians. In addition the military are working hard to achieve interoperability with NATO troops. As an example they are endeavouring to establish C4I system that would contribute to the interoperability of the Bulgarian troops with those of NATO. The country is developing renovation plans of a military airfield so that NATO planes can land in Bulgaria. While the Ministry of Defense is focusing on the logistics of the Bulgarian troops in SEEBRIG it provides excellent conditions for the functioning of the Brigade HQ in Plovdiv. The Bulgarian troops participating in SEEBRIG have to be up to the best standards since they are and in the future will interact with NATO troops on a regular basis. In December 2000, NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson's letter to Bulgarian Prime Minister Ivan Kostov served as a proof of the right direction the military reform is taking. In the letter, aimed to contribute to the speeding up of the military reform, Lord Robertson points out that the plans to establish small in size, highly efficient armed forces are heading in the right direction. The Secretary General highlights the need of a closer co-operation between the civilian and military leadership in order to provide the best possibilities for career development, education and training of the Bulgarian military. The decision of the Bulgarian leaders to modernise the military equipment and achieve interoperability in the field of air defense, troops control and

command, and logistics is defined by the Alliance as “very reasonable.”<sup>108</sup> NATO Secretary General, being aware of the importance of the military reform for the security of a country, as well as how difficult it is to take political decisions related to the reform, particularly those dealing with downsizing of the officer corps, expresses his and the Alliance support for Bulgaria. This support gives impetus to those devoted to carry out the reforms.

Mr, Prime Minister, I am personally determined to support the military reform in all partner countries and I would like to reiterate NATO’s will to support and contribute to your efforts. I would once again like to commend your engagement with the security and stability in Europe, as demonstrated during the Kosovo crisis. NATO in the future as well will co-operate with Bulgaria and will assist your efforts in the preparing for membership. Actively reforming the military can be a good credential, indicative of Bulgaria’s determination to join NATO and the EU.<sup>109</sup>

As far as Bulgaria’s participation in PfP and its IPP are concerned, account should be taken that:

On the basis of the Washington Summit Initiatives, Bulgaria specified its priorities concerning participation in the PfP and commitments relevant to future NATO membership. They are set out in the MAP Annual National Programme and in the package of Partnership Goals (PGs) approved for Bulgaria within the third PARP cycle. The tailored IPP for 2000-2001 is developed on the basis of the priority areas of the Annual National Program and supports the implementation of the 82 PGs within the expanded and adapted PARP. For the year 2000, the tailored IPP for Bulgaria includes about 450 activities, 35 of which hosted by Bulgaria. The Programme includes 26 exercises (4 host nation), 16 of which are NATO/PfP exercises and 10 - “in the spirit of PfP” exercises.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Letter of NATO Secretary General Lord G.Robertson to Prime Minister Ivan Kostov, Available [Online]:<<http://www.standardnews.com/archive2001/01/24/TheDay/story3.htm>,[28 January 2001]

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> *Survey of Overall PfP Interoperability-2000*, Part I-IPP Assessment, (October 2000, Sofia, Bulgaria), p.3.

In terms of the MAP Bulgaria was among those aspirant nations who supported the idea to accept MAP as an instrument for accession preparation. Of note, Bulgaria states its position that after it becomes a member of NATO, it will maintain its support to NATO Open Doors Policy.

Bulgaria has developed its Annual National Program based on the MAP. The ANP determines the objectives for membership preparation to include the planned period, concrete activities, responsible officials, and time frame. In accordance with the MAP and aimed at building a mechanism to coordinate the activities for preparation and membership in NATO a special structure within the government was developed. It focuses on planning, co-ordination and control over the activities related to Bulgaria's efforts for intensive co-operation and integration.<sup>111</sup>

In addition, Bulgaria is working on the exchange of expertise with the three new members of the Alliance. As a result in September 1999 the first expert meeting on preparation for NATO accession of the South-Eastern European countries with the newly accepted members from Central Europe was organised in Sofia. In October 2000 Bulgaria hosted the First Summit of the Defence Ministers of the Aspiring Countries with the participation of NATO Secretary General and the new NATO members. The main topic of the meeting was the MAP in NATO.



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<sup>111</sup> *Survey of Overall PfP Interoperability-2000*, Part III -MAP, Aspirant Section, (October 2000, Sofia, Bulgaria)

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#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Striving towards NATO membership Bulgaria got to know the real meaning of a Jewish proverb that looks paradoxical at first glance and reads “I am realistic that’s why I believe in miracles.” In the eleven years of democratisation the country managed to put behind for good the legacy of the communist past, to establish working institutions, and reintegrate into the community of free and democratic nations. It made its civilizational choice to belong to the world of stability and prosperity. Bulgaria was realistic in its efforts to establish peace, security, confidence and co-operation in the Balkans. It was realistic and consistent working within the framework of PfP. The participation in and hosting of a sufficient number of PfP exercises, as well as the contribution to SFOR and KFOR prove the country’s will. Nowadays Bulgaria through its IPP and Annual MAP Programme is striding towards the next wave of NATO Enlargement. In view of the future membership a great number of changes were made in the field of legislation and serious downsizing of the Armed Forces, aimed at achieving interoperability with the Alliance assets. The behaviour of the country during the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo made the case for its inclusion in the processes of European and NATO integration. After 1997 through its consistent policy Bulgaria proved that it would make a reliable and dependable member of NATO, which hopefully will become a reality soon. In addition to its work within the specific parameters set by the membership criteria, the country endeavours to improve the stability, security and confidence in the Balkans. Examples of Bulgaria’s efforts are its engagement in the SEDM process and substantial contribution to the

Multinational Peacekeeping Forces South Eastern Europe. Bulgaria hosts and provides excellent condition for the functioning of the HQ of the Multinational force and actively participates in all its activities, training and exercises. Bulgaria's biggest accomplishment is that throughout the SEDM process and the establishment of the South Eastern Brigade, the country managed to get together at the negotiation table Greece and Turkey. These partnership and co-operation modalities improve the confidence and stability necessary for the region.

The possibility for future Bulgarian membership in NATO is encouraging. Factors such as its pro-western President, who advances a positive worldview of Bulgaria and a stable government, contribute to Bulgaria's efforts aimed at membership in the Alliance. Additionally, Bulgaria's NATO-member neighbours Greece and Turkey strongly support future membership. Tri-national projects and efforts initiated by these countries show they can work together, thereby, improving regional stability.

Bulgaria has a good team, as represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense, dealing with the membership issues. During the last meeting between Bulgaria and the NATO Council in 19 plus 1 format, held in May 2000 in NATO HQ, the country's representatives gave excellent responses to the outstanding issues and showed that Bulgaria is taking into consideration the most important aspects of the preparation for membership. As a result of this meeting it became clear that the staff is learning from the past mistakes. Of note, the important issue of funding was raised at that meeting. The MAP itself is an expensive undertaking. The country representatives put NATO in a difficult position by

asking whether it was worth taking money from society and putting it into MAP was the right thing to do. They were looking for NATO's reassurance that Bulgaria is going in the right direction.<sup>112</sup>

Bulgaria and all MAP countries have to understand an important aspect of the MAP. The MAP and the defense reforms done by those countries are not for the sake of NATO, and NATO does not require them. The MAP countries have to implement defense reforms for their own good. Bulgaria has to carry out its defense reform no matter whether it will become NATO member or not. Today the status of the Armed Forces is far from being ideal. While defense reform does not necessarily mean new equipment and supplies, it means modernization, making the existing ones more efficient and effective.<sup>113</sup>

The need for the defense reform was well articulated by NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson in his address to the MAP Defense Ministers Conference, held in Sofia, Bulgaria on 13 October 2000.

Defence reform, in my view, carries very special and significant importance for your countries. First and foremost, defence reform is about meeting your national defence and security needs, it is a national interest. Secondly, it is about strengthening your Partnership and your ability to contribute to the security of the Alliance. I believe you will all be well served to keep this broad perspective on defence reform in mind. To do otherwise could risk the solid foundation that is required.

Defence reform is a long -term project. Our challenge over the next several years is help you set the proper course, to set the right vectors for change. We

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<sup>112</sup> This information was provided to the author of this thesis by Mr.George Katzirdakis in a special interview during his visit to NPS, Monterey, CA on 5 February 2001

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

need to be realistic; the defence reform required cannot and will not happen overnight. And it will not be easy or without pain.<sup>114</sup>

Up to now when explaining the strategic importance of its wish for membership, Bulgaria was strongly pulling the card of the troublemaker Yugoslavia. Not so long ago everybody wanted to surround Yugoslavia with NATO. The changed situation in Yugoslavia with its new President, new Government and attempts at democratisation is a positive signal for sufficient changes in the country, which have their impact on the region. While this is good for the region as a whole, the new situation in Yugoslavia is taking away Bulgaria's strongest card when the country explains why it should become NATO member as soon as possible. Related, Bulgaria should review its argumentation and should be taken on its own merit. When reviewing its argumentation for membership in the Alliance, it might be wise for Bulgaria to consider a scenario in which Russia becomes offensive. In such a scenario, if Bulgaria is closer to the Alliance, it can provide greater control of the Black Sea.<sup>115</sup> In terms of future membership account should be taken that “ In other words, entry into NATO is not automatic and the decision to invite new members will still be, in the end, a political one as well.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Speech by Lord Robertson, NATO Secretary General at the MAP Defence Ministers Conference, Sofia, Bulgaria, 13 October 2000, Available[Online]:<<http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2000/soo1013c.htm>. [5 February 2001]

<sup>115</sup> This information was provided to the author of this thesis by Mr. George Katzirdakis in a special interview during his visit to NPS, Monterey, CA on 5 February 2001

<sup>116</sup> Speech by Lord Robertson, NATO Secretary General at the MAP Defence Ministers Conference, Sofia, Bulgaria, 13 October 2000, Available[Online]:<<http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2000/soo1013c.htm>. [5 February 2001]

Of note, in the case of Bulgaria, in spite of the slow and unsteady start as well as the lost time, the recent years “ have seen a more tolerant, more prosperous nation moving – with renewed hope and ever greater confidence-closer to Europe. There are indeed good grounds for optimism and hope that Bulgaria is now firmly on course for a more secure future.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Trevor Waters, *Bulgaria-Now on Track for a Secure Future?*,  
Available[Online]:<<http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/csrc/G69-trw.htm>.,[22 January 2001], p.22

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National Security Concept of the Republic of Bulgaria

Plan 2004

Plan 2010

*Survey of Overall PfP Interoperability-2000*, October 2000, Sofia, Bulgaria.

## **APPENDIX 1. PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA<sup>118</sup>**

In compliance with the Bulgarian Constitution the Bulgarian Parliament has only one chamber, comprised of 240 MPs, elected for a period of four years. The MPs are elected on the basis of proportional representation with a 4 per cent electoral threshold. Because of which the smaller parties are encouraged to enter coalitions. The voters vote en bloc for a particular electoral list, i.e. vote without expressing preferences for the selection of candidates and/or the ranked order of the listed candidates.

In the last election held in 1997 the Union of Democratic Forces won the majority seats in Parliament. The Bulgarian Socialist Party comes next, followed by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms the Euroleft Party, and the Bulgaria Business Block as well as a couple of independent MPs.

The Union of Democratic Forces is a right hand coalition comprising of a number of smaller parties.

- The Bulgarian Socialist Party inherited the Bulgarian Communist Party.
- The Euroleft is a party that came into being as a fraction of the BSP.
- The Movement for Rights and Freedoms is an ethnic party.
- The next elections are due in May 2001.

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<sup>118</sup> Stan Berlun, Tomas Hellen, Frank H.Aarebot, The handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe, (Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 1998), p.361.

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## **APPENDIX 2. LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ANP – Annual National Plan

BSP – Bulgarian Socialist Party

CEE – Central and Eastern Europe

CSCE – Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe

CJTF – Combined Joint Task Forces

EAPC – Euro Atlantic Partnership Council

ESDI – European Security and Defense Identity

EU – European Union

IFOR – Implementation Force

IO – Interoperability Objective

IPP – Individual Partnership Program

HQ – Headquarters

MAP – Membership Action Plan

MPFSEE – Multinational Peacekeeping Force South Eastern Europe

NAC – North Atlantic Council

NACC – North Atlantic Cooperation Council

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PARP – Planning and Review Process

PfP – Partnership for Peace

PWP – Partnership Work Program

SEE – South Eastern Europe

SEEBRIG – South Eastern Brigade

SEDM – South East European Defense Ministerial

SFOR – Stabilization Force

SHAPE – Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

STANAG – Standardized Agreement

UDF – Union of Democratic Forces

WEU – West European Union

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